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Viewing cable 09SANJOSE890, COSTA RICA: VISIT OF SOUTHCOM AMB. TRIVELLI

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- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
09SANJOSE890	2009-10-16 23:12	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy San Jose

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.nacion.com/2011-03-06/Investigacion/NotasDestacadas/Investigacion2702320.aspx>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-03-06/Investigacion/NotaPrincipal/Investigacion2702324.aspx>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-03-06/Investigacion/NotasSecundarias/Investigacion2702325.aspx>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-03-06/Investigacion/NotasSecundarias/Investigacion2702326.aspx>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-03-06/Investigacion/NotasSecundarias/Investigacion2702327.aspx>

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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1314
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHMFISS/DIRJIATF SOUTH PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY
RHMFISS/DIRJIATF SOUTH J3 PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN JOSE 000890

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR WHA/CEN, ALSO FOR SOUTHCOM AMB. TRIVELLI

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/14/2019
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MASS](#) [SNAR](#) [CS](#) [HO](#)
SUBJECT: COSTA RICA: VISIT OF SOUTHCOM AMB. TRIVELLI

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. On October 6-7, SOUTHCOM Civilian Deputy Commander Ambassador Paul Trivelli visited Costa Rica and met with senior GOCR officials, including President Arias. The consistent theme throughout Amb. Trivelli's visit was GOCR requests for further security-related assistance via the Merida Initiative, SOUTHCOM, or other funding sources. On Honduras, President Arias told Amb. Trivelli he believed the visa revocations for top de facto government leaders were having an effect and added that even more visa sanctions might pressure the de factos to sign the San Jose Accord. END SUMMARY.

MEETING WITH PRESIDENT ARIAS

¶2. (C) In his meeting with President Arias and Minister of Public Security Janina Del Vecchio, Amb. Trivelli described how US SOUTHCOM had transformed over the past two years and that its relationship with Costa Rica had grown, especially in humanitarian assistance. President Arias seemed satisfied with the increased cooperation and appreciated Amb. Trivelli's briefing on how SOUTHCOM was engaging with Latin America.

¶3. (C) Turning to Honduras, President Arias believed that U.S. visa revocations of senior de facto government officials was having an affect. He encouraged the USG to further its visa sanctions against some former Honduran presidents who were "siding" with Micheletti and four "well-known" businessmen involved with the June 28 removal of Zelaya from power. Arias believed that further pressure on the de facto Honduran government might push them towards signing the San Jose Accord.

"WE NEED MORE DIRECT ASSISTANCE"

¶4. (C) Amb. Trivelli also met separately with Minister Del Vecchio and other senior officials from Costa Rica's Ministry of Public Security (MPS) to discuss strategic and counter-narcotics cooperation. (MPS is charged with both domestic and national security as Costa Rica has no military.) Del Vecchio highlighted the success of the USG-GOCR bilateral maritime agreement that has been largely responsible for successful narcotics interdiction efforts in Costa Rican waters. She appreciated the role of the U.S. as a real partner in counternarcotics cooperation.

¶5. (C) Del Vecchio requested additional USG security assistance in many areas including community policing, however, she specifically was seeking assistance in the following areas:

-- To participate in SOUTHCOM's possible Regional Aircraft Modernization Plan (RAMP) to modernize and perhaps obtain new aircraft for Costa Rica's Air Wing that is mostly focused on counter-drug, search and rescue, and air ambulance operations;

-- Receiving, via donation, older U.S. Coast Guard 110-foot patrol boats to eventually replace Costa Rica's aging three 82-foot patrol boats (NOTE: via Merida FMF funding those 82-foot patrol boats will be renovated/modernized. END NOTE.); and

-- Creation of a police intelligence platform in terms of both infrastructure and technology.

¶6. (C) One of Del Vecchio's operational commanders, Allan Solano of the Drug Control Police (PCD, a rough equivalent to the DEA), briefed Amb. Trivelli on increased drug-trafficking violence taking place in Costa Rica. He said there was firm evidence that the Sinoloa Cartel was operating in Costa Rica and that most of the violence was between competing drug

trafficking organizations (DTOs). He also said that internal drug consumption amongst Costa Ricans was increasing and that Costa Rica no longer was just a "drug transit" country.

NATIONAL LEGISLATORS: MORE ASSISTANCE PLEASE

¶17. (SBU) During a meeting with Costa Rican national legislators from their counter-narcotics and public security committees, lawmakers echoed what Amb. Trivelli heard from MPS regarding the need for further security assistance. Evita Arguedas, an independent, told us that Costa Rica needed increased Merida Initiative assistance to roll back the tide of crime. She also highlighted that cooperation between Costa Rica's various police forces (over 10 in total, depending on jurisdiction/mission) needed to cooperate more smoothly and be less "stove-piped." Luis Barrantes, from Libertarian Movement (ML), said that after neglecting security issues for nearly 30 years, Costa Rica was far behind but that the solution to the problem must be a "whole" approach and not in any one area alone.

¶18. (C) When Amb. Trivelli asked if there was a clear "national security plan" in Costa Rica, legislators clearly agreed that development of one would better focus their efforts and provide overall "vision" to the country. The Ambassador linked successful development and investment in the country with firm commitments to security by the GOCR.

¶19. (SBU) We asked legislators if they would consider extending USN/USCG ship visit permissions from six months to one year. They said it would probably be better and positively received by most legislators but asked that the USG provide them a briefing on the effectiveness vis-a-vis narcotics/law enforcement cooperation of the ship visits.

¶10. (SBU) Legislators expressed concern about the recent opening here, by the Venezuelan Embassy, of so-called "bases of peace." Seen by most in the media as an effort to counter the "spread" of "U.S." bases in Colombia, most called the action a provocation and would be asking the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to find out more information. (NOTE: Amb. Trivelli also raised this issue with President Arias, who expressed his concern over the "bases de paz" and subsequently made public statements instructing the foreign ministry to investigate thoroughly whether these were in compliance with the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Missions. END NOTE.)

CID-GALLUP: ONE IN FOUR PER HOUSEHOLD VICTIMS OF CRIME

¶11. (SBU) In a meeting with Carlos Denton of CID-Gallup and some members of the security committee of the local Amcham, briefers detailed the public's prevailing sense of domestic insecurity in Costa Rica. According to polling done by CID-Gallup over the past four months, one in four persons in each household in Costa Rica has been a crime victim, typically from assault or robbery. Figures similar to these are reflected throughout Central America per the polling. This clearly demonstrates, said Denton, that "crime in Central America is a real problem, it is not perception."

¶12. (SBU) On drug consumption, Denton told us that getting accurate data from respondents was difficult since few people would admit to drug use openly. For example, he said that when the question is asked directly, only about 3 percent of people would admit to using drugs; however, when asked "do you know someone who uses drugs?" the response was higher at around 14 percent.

¶13. (SBU) On possible ways Amcham/CID-Gallup could help the GOCR in its security efforts, Amb. Trivelli suggested that:

-- When large U.S. companies visit Costa Rica, they should emphasize how important security is to economic prosperity

and try to seek appointments with senior members of the GOCR, including President Arias;

-- Amcham might be able to assist the Ministry of Public Security with their community policing program;

-- Support drug/substance abuse education efforts; and

-- Do a new drug abuse survey to roughly determine number of drug users/abusers in Costa Rica to better define the problem.

MEDIA INTERVIEWS

¶14. (U) During his visit to Costa Rica, Amb. Trivelli had a successful round of media interviews including exclusives with La Nacion (most respected Costa Rican daily), Radio Colombia (center-right station), and Channel 11, one of the major national television networks. Following his meeting with President Arias, Amb. Trivelli was interviewed by Channel 7. He also received additional media coverage by the Tico Times, a weekly English language newspaper and with A.M. Costa Rica, an online English language paper.

¶15. (U) During his interviews, Amb. Trivelli highlighted bilateral initiatives over the past year, including: MEDRETES and other humanitarian projects, plans to build a new Costa Rican Coast Guard Academy, and projects aimed to combat drug trafficking such as the installation of a communications platform in Cerro Azul, Costa Rica.

COMMENT

¶16. (C) The clear message received by Amb. Trivelli's visit to Costa Rica was GOCR requests for further security cooperation and assistance. Though refraining from being critical on the relatively small amount of assistance that Costa Rica is receiving in comparison to Mexico or the war in Iraq as he has been in the past, President Arias asked for further assistance and seemed truly grateful for USG security cooperation. Post believes that targeted assistance in police professionalization, including community policing, and further maritime assistance would benefit both Costa Rica and the U.S. in addressing domestic insecurity issues and interdicting drug trafficking.

BRENNAN